GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3084
ANSWERED ON:09.12.2002
SALE OF AFRICAN IVORY IN INTERNATIONAL MARKET
ANADI CHARAN SAHU;GADDE RAMAMOHAN;M.V.V.S MURTHI

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem captioned `A Failure, elephantine` published in the `The Pioneer` dated November 15,2002;

(b) if so, whether the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) conference has decided to allow limited sale of Afrian ivory in the international market;

(c) if so, whether the Indian Elephant now faces a threat as a result thereof;

(d) if so, whether the Government officials present at the meeting failed to pre-empt such a decision;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the steps the Government intends to undertake to prevent illegal trade of ivory and poaching of the elephants for the purpose?

Answer

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R.BALLU)

(a) & (b) Yes, Sir. The 12th meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) was held in Santiago (Chile) from November 3 to 15, 2002.The Conference of Parties has decided to permit one-off sale of ivory from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa subject to the following conditions:

1. The sale will be restricted to the existing stockpiles of legally procured ivory in the possession of the governments of Botswana (20,000 kg), Namibia (10,000 kg) and South Africa (30,000 kg).

2. The ivory will be exported only to countries having adequate ivory-trade control system and will not be re-exported.

3. Trade will not be permitted before May 2004 and in any event not before the CITES Secretariat has verified the prospective importing countries and the MIKE (Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants ? a monitoring system approved by CITES) has reported to the Secretariat on the baseline information (e.g. elephant population numbers, incidence of illegal killing).

4. Trade will be affected only after the Standing Committee of CITES has agreed that the above conditions have been met.

5. The income from the proposed sale will be utilised exclusively for elephant conservation and community development programmes in the respective exporting countries.

(c) The Conference of Parties has imposed many conditions as mentioned above on the exporting and the importing countries with a view to guard against any adverse impact of the proposed sale on the African and the Asian elephants. Moreover, only a one-off sale of ivory, rather than regular international trade, has been permitted and the exporting countries will have to seek fresh permission from the next Conference of Parties due in December 2004. As such, no major threat to the Indian elephant is apprehended.

(d) & (e) No, Sir. The decisions of the Conference of Parties were taken with a two-third majority in a secret voting. India voted against the proposals in question.

(f) Government of India has already initiated many steps to prevent illegal trade of ivory and poaching of elephants as mentioned below:

1. Government of India has launched a special scheme known as `Project Elephant` for providing financial assistance to the major elephant-bearing states for protection of elephants and their habitats. Till 31.3.2002, the Central Government had released Rs. 52.42 Crores to the state governments under this Project. An amount of Rs. 9 Crores has been earmarked during the current financial year under the Project.

2. Government of India has identified 25 Elephant Reserves in the country with a view to ensure systematic and focussed management of viable populations of elephants over their entire range. Of these, 14 Elephant Reserves have since been notified by

the state governments.

3. Government of India has banned ivory trade within the country. It has also banned import and export of ivory.

4. Government of India has initiated steps for implementing MIKE (Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants) Â¾ a monitoring system prescribed by CITES, to assess the impact of international ivory trade on the Indian elephants.

5. A Special Co-ordination and Enforcement Committee comprising representatives of various enforcement agencies under the Central Government has been set up under the chairmanship of Secretary, Environment & Forests, Government of India, for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife. 6. The Central Government has empowered the C.B.I. under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute the wildlife offenders.

7 Ministry of Home Affairs has written to all the State Governments to lend a helping hand to the field formations of the Forest Departments to curb poaching and illegal trade in wildlife.

8. Prime Minister of India has also written letters to the state chief ministers asking them to strengthen the protection mechanism for wild animals.